

Population genetic structure in the Coastal Cactus Wren and California Gnatcatcher in southern California

Natural lands in coastal southern California largely exist as discrete patches separated by urban and agricultural lands, roads and highways. Managing for population connectivity among preserve networks may be integral to the long term persistence of species, particularly when fire and other disturbances impact or extirpate local populations. Using genetic techniques and banding, we are investigating gene flow and movement of Coastal Cactus Wrens and California Gnatcatchers throughout southern California (San Diego through Ventura Counties). Genetic analyses provide a snapshot of functional connectivity (and where it's lacking) across the landscape, and highlight where further action is needed.